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RECLAMATION

Colorado River System Status Update: Overview of the Lower Basin DCP and “500 Plus” Plan

IBWC Colorado River Citizens Forum

May 18, 2022

Colorado River – Current Conditions

(as of May 15, 2022)



Lake Powell near Glen Canyon Dam



Lake Mead near Hoover Dam

- Driest 22-year period (2000-2021) on record
- Water year 2021 was the second lowest inflow into Lake Powell since 1964
- 2022 forecast 62% of average
- Lake Powell and Lake Mead at historically low water levels
 - Lake Powell current elevation is 3,526 feet or 25% of capacity
 - Lake Mead current elevation is 1,050 feet or 30% of capacity



Water Year Snowpack and Precipitation^{1,2} as of May 16, 2022

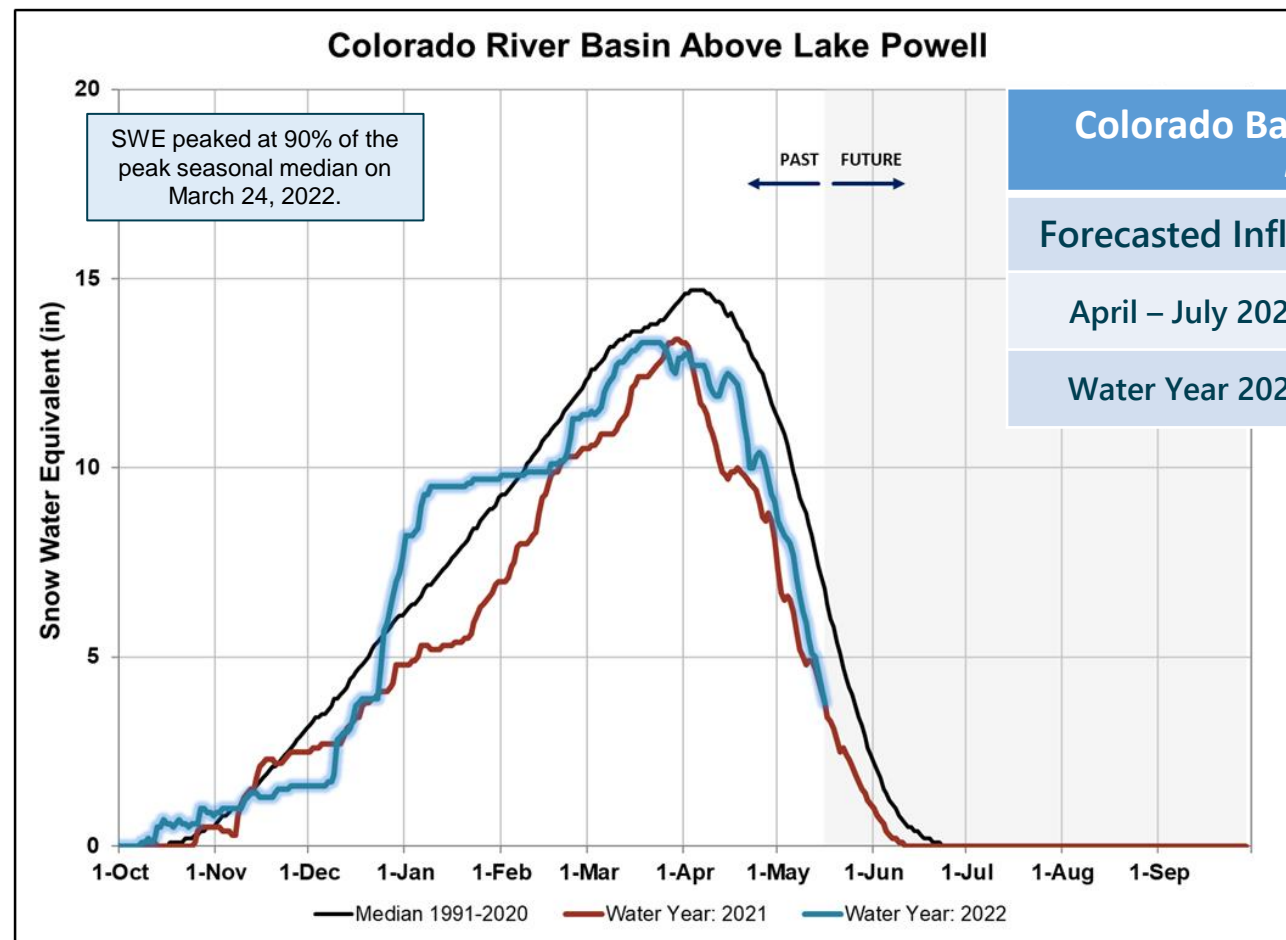
Colorado River Basin above Lake Powell

Water Year 2022
Precipitation
(year-to-date)

92% of average

Current Snowpack

58% of median



Colorado Basin River Forecast Center

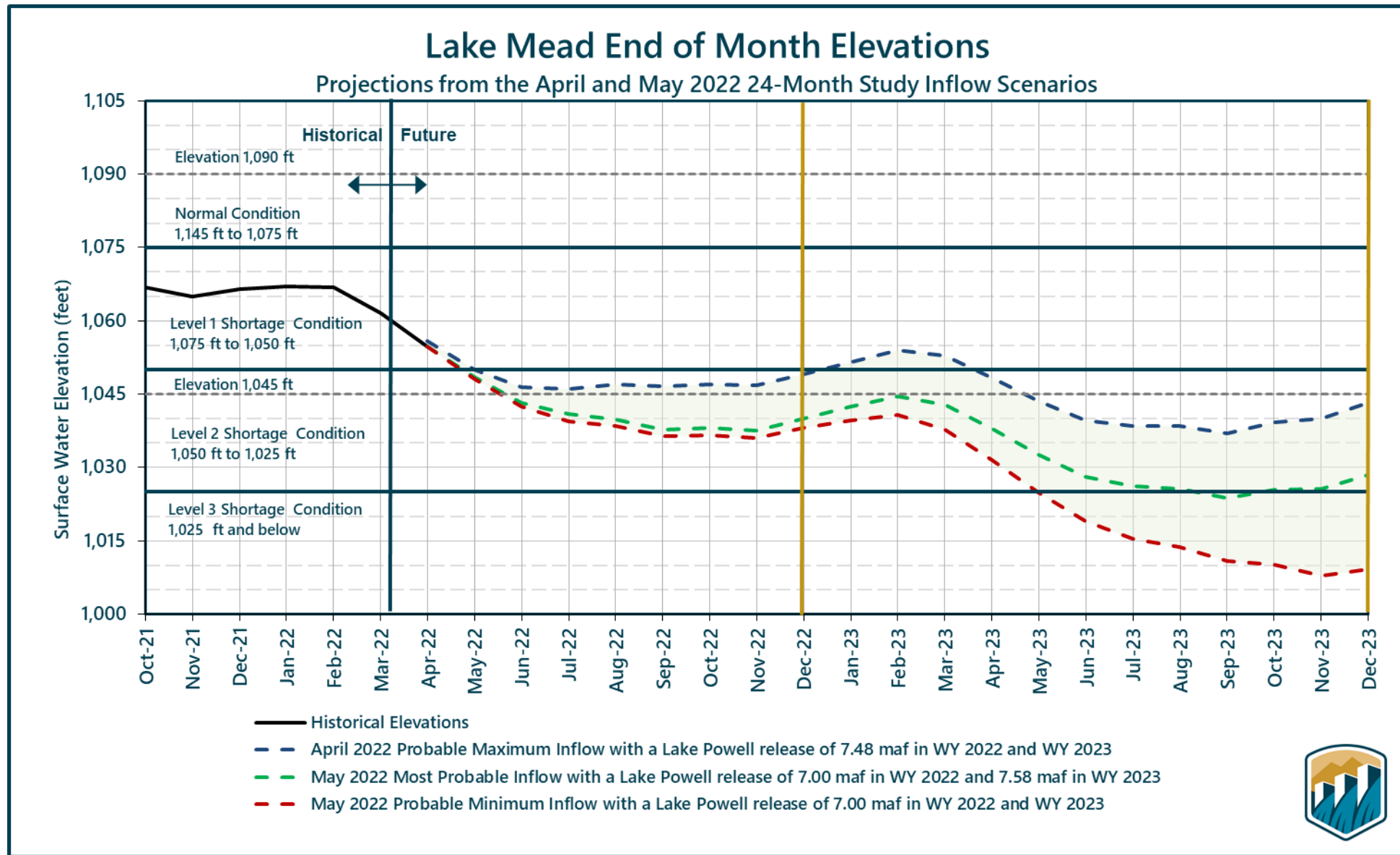
Dated May 4, 2022

Forecasted Inflow	MAF	% of Average
April – July 2022	3.80	59%
Water Year 2022	5.98	62%

¹Percent of normal precipitation is based on an arithmetic mean, or average; percent of normal snowpack is based on the median value for a given date.

²Statistics are based on the 30-year period of record from 1991-2020.

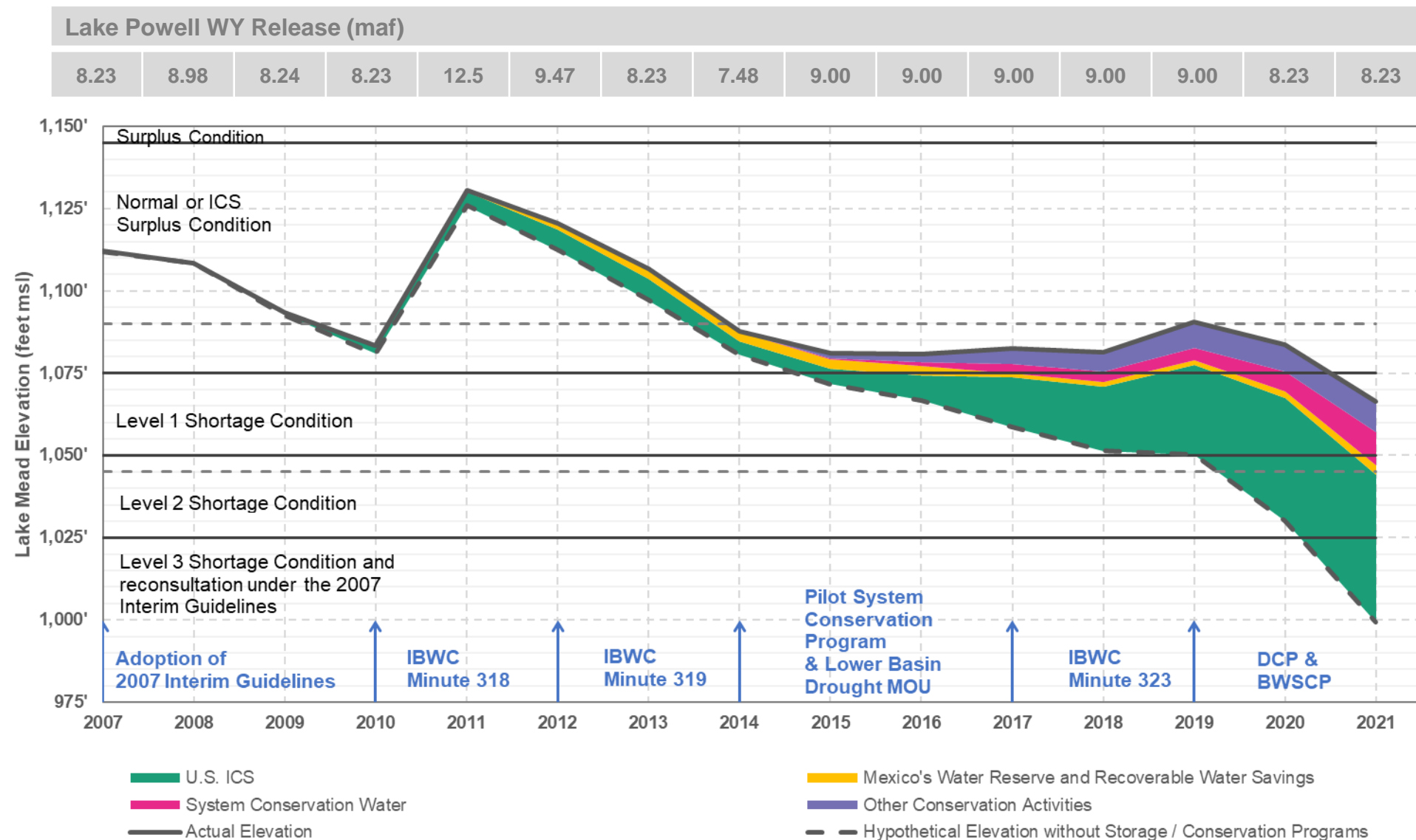




The chart above displays projected “physical” elevations for Lake Mead. The operating determination for upcoming years, however, will be based on a projected “effective” elevation in the August 2022 24-Month Study. Based on May 2022 24-Month Study modeling, Lake Mead’s operating condition for calendar year 2023 is projected to be within the 1,045-1,050 ft elevation band.



Lake Mead Storage and Conservation¹



¹End of calendar year 2021 balances of U.S. ICS and Mexico's Water Reserve, system conservation water, and other voluntary contributions to Lake Mead are provisional and are subject to change.

Colorado River Drought Contingency Plans

- Implemented on May 20, 2019 and in place through 2026
- Actions are in addition to the 2007 Interim Guidelines
- Goal is to reduce the risk of Lake Mead and Lake Powell reaching critically low elevations (1,020 feet and 3,490/3,525 feet, respectively)
- Key Elements of the Lower Basin DCP:
 - Requires additional water savings contributions by Lower Basin States
 - Allows for additional flexibility for water storage and recovery to incentivize conservation
 - Secretary's efforts to create or conserve 100,000 AF of system water annually
 - Triggers Mexico's Water Scarcity Contingency Plan



Shortage Reductions and Water Savings Contributions
Under the 2007 Interim Guidelines, Minute 323, Lower Basin Drought Contingency Plan (DCP)*,
and Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan
(Volumes in thousand acre-feet)

Lake Mead Elevations (in feet)	2007 Interim Guidelines Shortage Reductions (U.S.)		Minute 323 Delivery Reductions (Mexico)	Total Combined Shortage Reductions (U.S. and Mexico)	DCP Water Savings Contributions (U.S.)			Binational Water Scarcity Contingency Plan Water Savings (Mexico)	Combined Volumes of Shortage Reductions and Water Savings Contributions by Lower Basin State and by Country (U.S. and Mexico)					Total Combined Volumes (U.S. and Mexico)
	AZ	NV	Mexico	Lower Basin States + Mexico	AZ	NV	CA	Mexico	AZ Total	NV Total	CA Total	Lower Basin States Total	Mexico Total	Lower Basin States + Mexico
1,090 - >1,075	0	0	0	0	192	8	0	41	192	8	0	200	41	241
1,075 - >1050	320	13	50	383	192	8	0	30	512	21	0	533	80	613
1,050 - >1,045	400	17	70	487	192	8	0	34	592	25	0	617	104	721
1,045 - >1,040	400	17	70	487	240	10	200	76	640	27	200	867	146	1,013
1,040 - >1,035	400	17	70	487	240	10	250	84	640	27	250	917	154	1,071
1,035 - >1,030	400	17	70	487	240	10	300	92	640	27	300	967	162	1,129
1,030 – 1,025	400	17	70	487	240	10	350	101	640	27	350	1,017	171	1,188
<1,025	480	20	125	625	240	10	350	150	720	30	350	1,100	275	1,375

*Under the Lower Basin DCP, the United States will take affirmative actions to create or conserve 100,000 acre-feet or more of Colorado River system water on an annual basis to contribute to conservation of water supplies in Lake Mead and other Colorado River reservoirs in the Lower Basin. All actions taken by the United States shall be subject to applicable federal law, including availability of appropriations.



Lower Basin DCP - Section 3.b

The Lower Basin DCP Agreement states in Section 3.b that:

Subject to applicable law, including the availability of appropriations . . . The Secretary will take affirmative actions to implement Lower Basin programs designed to create or conserve 100,000 acre-feet per annum or more of Colorado River System water to contribute to conservation of water supplies in Lake Mead and other Colorado River reservoirs in the Lower Basin.



Lower Basin DCP - Section 3.b Approach

- Focus on projects with recurring benefits to conserve water annually over a longer period
- Recognizing that one-time system conservation agreements will bridge the gap over the term of the DCP
- Reclamation has completed projects and agreements that will generate approximately 500,000 AF through 2026
- Looking into additional agreements to generate additional system conservation water will help to meet the DCP target and “500 Plus” Plan MOU



Lower Basin DCP - Additional Actions



- The August 2021 24-Month Study, using the minimum probable inflow, projected Lake Mead to fall below 1,030 feet in July 2023
- This triggered a provision in the DCP that the Secretary and Lower Division States shall consult to determine additional actions to protect against the potential for Lake Mead to decline below 1,020 feet
- The Lower Basin “500 Plus” Plan was signed in December 2021



Lower Basin DCP - “500 Plus” Plan MOU¹



- Targets an additional 1 million acre-feet of conservation through voluntary measures in 2022 and 2023
- Sources of additional water conservation include:
 - Creation of System Conservation water
 - Creation of Intentionally Created Surplus (ICS)
 - Decrease in planned ICS releases
- Plan is being implemented cooperatively by the MOU parties
- To date, about 350,000 AF of additional water has been generated



For more information:
<https://www.usbr.gov/lc/riverops.html>



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